

Catawba County Farm Facts

Rank in State by commodity:

- 13th in barley
- 15th in beef cows
- 21st for all cattle
- 21st in milk cows

In 1997:

- 596 farms in County
- 72,264 acres engaged in
farming
- average farm size was 121
acres
- average age of farmer was 58
years old



For more information contact:

Mary K. George, AICP
County Planner
Catawba County Planning
P.O. Box 389
Newton, NC 28658

Phone: 828-465-8264

Fax: 828-465-8484

Email: mary@mail.co.catawba.nc.us

Web site:

www.co.catawba.nc.us/depts/planning/farms.htm


Voluntary Agricultural Districts



Catawba County, North Carolina



P r i d e i n o u r
f a r m i n g
h e r i t a g e



Voluntary Agricultural Districts

Catawba County's history is deeply rooted in farming. Within decades after Adam Sherrill crossed the Catawba River, pioneers began settling the land that was to become Catawba County. These men and women were engaged mostly in farming, drawn to the area by cheap land and abundant opportunities for farming.

Today, the farming heritage of the county is still evident in areas such as Balls Creek and Sherrills Ford.



However, the rapid urbanization of the county is beginning to have impacts on the farming community. The most recent agricultural census indicates that in the last 40 years, the county has lost over 40,000 acres of farmland, with 10,000 acres being lost during the five year period of 1992-1997. Likewise, the number of farms has decreased by 64% in the past 40 years.

In order to assist farmers to remain in the agriculture business, different programs have been made available at the State and local levels. One program being considered by the Catawba County Board of Commissioners is a voluntary agricultural district program.

What is a Voluntary Agricultural District Program?

The purpose of a voluntary agricultural district program is to increase the identity and pride in the agricultural community and its way of life. It also provides protection for farmers from non-farm development including nuisance suits and other negative impacts on properly managed farms.

The agricultural district program is a **voluntary** opportunity for farmers to have their land identified as a farming district. By having land designated as a district, the farmer lets the community know that he is actively engaged in farming and to expect the various types of activities which are associated with a farm. This program is **not zoning** nor is it a regulatory process.

The County is interested in assisting farmers to stay in the farming business. Through a voluntary agricultural district, farmers may benefit by being identified as a special district which will highlight their contributions to the community.



What would the requirements be to participate in the program?

Some minimum requirements would be established by ordinance in order to participate in the voluntary agricultural district program. The ordinance would include the following criteria:

- qualification for the present-use value taxation program
- minimum acreage
- signing of a farmland preservation agreement

The ordinance would allow farmers to remove themselves from a district should they decide at a later time that they no longer wish to be included.

Your feedback is requested!

At this time, the voluntary agricultural district program is just a **proposal**. We would like to hear from you about your interest in developing such a program in Catawba County. Currently, there are 25 other counties in the State which have such a program. Locally, these include Alexander, Caldwell and Iredell Counties.

Staff will be meeting with the farming community in Fall 2002 to gauge their interest in the program. Should farmers be interested in participating, staff will proceed with developing an ordinance and present it to the Board of Commissioners for adoption.